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ABSTRACT

A survey was taken to determine the amount of speech activity in Kentucky secondary schools. Of 455 junior and senior high schools in Kentucky, 266 schools completed and returned the questionnaires. The results of the survey indicate the relative newness of speech communication as an academic discipline in Kentucky and point to some concerns for speech program development: the content of high school speech courses was quite diverse; over half the speech programs were less than ten years old; most schools offer at least one speech course, but few schools include speech courses in the core (required) curriculum; fewer than half of the speech teachers have academic backgrounds in speech communication; 80% of the teachers have taught speech three years or less; and school administrations provide relatively little financial support for nonclassroom speech activities. Kentucky schools will realize the potential benefits of speech communication education only when there exists a greater appreciation for the importance of speech training and a greater commitment to excellence in speech instruction. (Fourteen tables of findings are included.) (RL)

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THE STATUS OF SPEECH IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENTUCKY

submitted by

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THE STATUS OF SPEECH IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENTUCKY

Since the first issue of the Kentucky Journal of Communication Arts in 1969[1], little has been done to provide the teachers, the secondary and college/university administrators, or the public with an understanding of the progress of speech education in the secondary systems within the Commonwealth. Therefore, this study explored the current status of speech education in junior and senior high schools in Kentucky, and suggests ways in which progress can be accelerated in the future.

METHOD

A survey was taken to determine the amount of speech activity in Kentucky forthe 1975-76 school year. A letter of explanation and intent was sent to the principal of each of the 455 junior and senior high schools in Kentucky. Enclosed was a three page questionnaire that required the cooperation of the principal and the speech instructors for completion. The questionnaire was divided into three sections designed to provide information on academic programs in speech, qualifications of speech instructors and the amount and scope of extracurricular activities. The questions were tested for clarity by faculty and graduate students at Murray State University. A response time of six weeks was allowed. A similar letter of explanation and intent was sent to the superintendent of each school district with the request that he encourage the principals of each school in the district to cooperate in the survey. A follow up letter and another copy of the questionnaire was mailed on the day following the response deadline to the principal of each delinquent school.

RESULTS

The initial request resulted in 184 responses (40%), while the second request produced 82 more responses bringing the total percentage of return to 58%. Such a return was considered sufficient to support a valid study. See Table 1.

INSERT TABLE 1

The schools were divided into junior or senior schools.[2] They were then divided into three geographic regions: Western (W), Central (C), and Eastern (E). The regions were arbitrarily determined from a map of the Kentucky Educational Development Regions.

INSERT MAP OF KENTUCKY

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS IN SPEECH

Of the 177 responding high schools, 150 (85%) taught at least one course in speech. Such a figure represents a significant increase over the finding of Capps in 1969.[3] A plurality of these schools (64) offered only one course in speech while the range ran from zero to eight. There was also little uniformity in the duration of the classes with a nine week session emerging as the most popular.

In junior high schools, only 36% taught one or more courses in speech.[4] More junior high schools also offered only one course with a strong preference for the course to last the entire year. See Table 2.

INSERT TABLE 2

In only eleven senior high schools (8%), ten of which were private, was speech found to be a required subject. However, speech was frequently discovered in phase-elective programs. Of those replying, 62% were included as part of the phase-elective program.

Only three junior high schools required speech, and less than one fourth (24%) included speech in the phase elective program.

Both senior and junior schools showed a strong preference for meeting on a daily basis. Ninety-three per cent of the speech classes in the senior schools met daily while 88% of the speech classes met daily at the junior high level.

Of the senior high schools teaching one or more courses in speech, 71% use a text book while only 35% of the junior high courses are taught with the aid of a text. The text most often used in the high school course was The Art of Speaking (Ginn Publishing Company). See Table 3.

INSERT TABLE 3

The content of the high school speech course was found to be quite diverse. The following table demonstrates the per cent of school including the specified unit of instruction. See Table 4.

INSERT TABLE 4

The results indicated that the average speech program in the state was quite young. Over one-half (57%) of the schools that answered the question had established a curriculum in speech ten years ago or less. See Table 5.

INSERT TABLE 5

Recognizing that the future of any academic discipline rests squarely upon the shoulders of those who provide instruction in any particular area, this study purposed in part to determine the amount and quality of preparation of those who teach speech in Kentucky junior and senior high schools. Attention was given to educational levels and areas of experience, co-curricular activity, combination of subjects taught, and previous experience in speech activities in college.

It became immediately apparent that there was significant imbalance in the number of men and women teaching speech in the secondary systems. Of the 184 schools that provided the needed information, 135 (73%) employed a female, 38

(21%) employed a male, and 11 (6%) employed both a male and a female to teach speech. All speech insturctors had earned baccalaureate degrees and 41% had earned Masters degrees. Another 9% had gained Rank I certification having completed thirty hours beyond the Masters. Two per cent had earned various other degrees beyond the Rank I program. The net result was exactly 52% of those teaching speech in Kentucky had a minimun of Masters training.

While the level of education attained by the speech teachers was commendable, the areas of academic training were far less encouraging. Only 26% of those teaching speech had majored in speech in college. Another 17% had acquired a speech minor. Forty-five per cent had graduated with an English major, 5% with an English minor, 2% with a theatre major, and another 5% in unrelated fields. The net result pointed out that less than one half (43%) of those teaching speech have either a major or minor in the subject.

The areas of graduate work were of little more comfort. Nineteen per cent of those with Masters degrees had taken them in speech. Thirty seven per cent held Masters degrees in English, and 22% held Masters degrees in Education Another 6% held a Masters in Theatre, and 15% held their graduate degrees in other areas.

In order to determine the amount of teaching experience that characterized the speech teachers, the respondents were asked to indicate the total number of years experience and the number of years teaching speech. Thirty-five per cent of those responding had been teaching from one to five years. Forty per cent had been teaching from six to ten years. Ten per cent had been teaching from eleven to fifteen years, and fifteen per cent had been teaching over fifteen years. The same teachers reported having taught speech for a significantly shorter period of time. Eighty per cent of the teachers had taught speech three years or less. Fifteen per cent had taught from eight to twelve years,

and only 5% had taught speech more than twelve years.

Only 22% of the teachers surveyed taught speech on a full time basis while 76% indicated that they taught speech in conjunction with some other subject. Another 2% indicated another arrangement for their speech instruction.[6] Of particular interest was the combination of courses taught by speech instructors. At the senior high level, 70% of all responding teachers taught English-Speech combinations. At the junior high level 45% taught the same combination. See Table 6.

INSERT TABLE 6

In response to a question concerning involvement in class plays or school productions*, 67% indicated that they were expected to assist in such activities. The expections was significantly higher among high school teachers (70%) than among junior high teachers (55%). The range of plays per year was zero to twelve with exactly one half requiring no participation at all in school plays. A much smaller per cent was expected to sponsor any kind of school production (25%). See Table 7.

INSERT TABLE 7

Of the responding schools, 69% of the speech teachers had participated in one or more areas of speech activity in college. See Table 8.

INSERT TABLE 8

There was very little difference in college participation between junior (69%) and senior (70%) high teachers.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Sixty eight per cent of all schools that taught speech indicated an extracurricular speech program; however, only 56% of all reporting schools claimed membership in the Kentucky High School Speech League. See Table 9.

*Productions were defined as such activities as musicals, class or individual recitals, programs. etc.

INSERT TABLE 9

Of those schools providing extracurricular activities, 74% held membership in the state speech league. See Table 10.

INSERT TABLE 10

An attempt was made to determine the area of major concentration of extracurricular activites, however, the results were inconclusive and such a determination could not be made.[7]

The amount of budget that a school received for extracurricular activities varied greatly. The approximate budgets, excluding proceeds from plays, productions, etc., are demonstrated in Table 11.

INSERT TABLE 11.

The results indicated that the Western Region had the smallest percentage (12%) operating without a budget and the largest percentage in the highest category (25%) at the high school level. Support at the junior high level was reduced significantly. The Eastern Region appeared to suffer from the smallest amount of administrative support with 42% of all responding high schools reporting no such support at all.

The largest single expenditure was transportation (33%) followed by fees (30%), lodging (20%), meals (12%), and miscellaneous (5%).

School administrations were credited with a wide range of support toward the total extracurricular budget. A breakdown of the percentage of administrative support toward the total budget by division and region is reported in Table 12.

INSERT TABLE 12

A variety of methods for providing additional funding were utilized. Car washes, bake sales, work days, concession stand operations, and raffles were among the most frequent.

Only 31 of the 266 (12%) responding schools hosted any kind of interscholastic speech activity, with the great majority (84%) occurring at the high school level. The tournament proved to be far the most popular activity engulfing 78% of the total activity. See Table 13.

INSERT TABLE 13

An analysis of the events offered at the various activities revealed that oral interpretation and public speaking events were those most common at tournaments, workshops and festivals. See Table 14.

INSERT TABLE 14

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of the survey demonstrated multiple areas in which everyone involved with speech education should be concerned. Many of the difficulties discovered can be attributed to the youth of the speech area as an academic discipline. The discrepency that was reported between the total years of teaching experience and the number of years of speech instruction indicated that speech has frequently been added to the load of a teacher already employed in some other area; usually English.

Many staffing policies are based on the principle that after enough students express interest in a course; someone, regardless of how ill qualified, will teach it. It is little wonder that such courses often generate minimal enthusiasm among the students. Rather, there must emerge an awareness among those with the responsibility of filling staff positions that the potential of any area of study can be realized only when taught by someone knowledgeable about the area and trained in the best possible instructional methods. There must be first quality instruction, and then the benefit and acceptance of the student will follow. It appears that far too frequently the order has been reversed.

In the schools where speech classes and speech activities were under the

supervision of an instructor trained in speech, the program generally was much more successful in terms of number of classes taught, range of units included and the extent of extracurricular or co-curricular speech activities. The need for instructors trained in the field of speech communication was quite obvious.

The study revealed that the philosophy of most administrators (and perhaps most speech instructors) was to view outside speech activities as "extracurricular" rather than "co-curricular." This philosophy was manifested in the generally low amount of financial support provided by school administrations for non-classroom speech activity. While the distinction may at first appear to be only one of semantics, closer examination reveals a much more basic distinction. Those of us involved with speech education must recognize that tournaments, workshops and festivals are not just something in addition to speech classes, but rather are a very integral extension of the class. Few would attempt to teach chemistry without provisions for laboratory work. We must come to the realization that speech training extends far beyond the boundaries of the classroom, and promote the participation in activities designed to give breadth to language skills and experiences.

The Program of Studies for Kentucky Schools states in the introduction that its design, in part, is to

> ...provide more flexibility in program planning at the local school level. More than ever, it is the responsibility of local leadership to select and arrange offerings to provide for the diverse needs of their own student population. In addition to student needs, staff potential, facilities, community resources, and size of school are prime considerations in planning at the local level.[8]

This study indicated a reluctance of administrators throughout the state to take advantage of this opportunity for speech to grow into an independent unit of liberal arts education. Oral communication, journalism, dramatics and reading are presently recognized as potential one year courses for 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade students. However, they are included as

English units, and usually taught by instructors trained in English.

It is therefore incumbent upon our state association to make school officials and the general public, as well as the students, aware of the importance of a quality speech education program as a fundamental and unique academic area. Our colleges and universities must insure that when a student graduates with certification in speech that he/she is capable of delivering quality. Only when there exists an appreciation for the importance of speech training and a corresponding committment to excellence in its instruction can the potential of the area be realized.

Footnotes

[1]R. David Clark and Patrick R. Leigh, "A Normative Survey of Speech Programs in Kentucky High Schools," Kentucky Journal of Communication Arts 1 (Fall 1969): 15-25.

[2]Junior and senior high schools were determined by their listing in the 1975-76 issue of the Kentucky School Directory, an educational bulletin of the Kentucky Department of Education.

[3]Randall Capps, "Speech in Kentucky High Schools in 1928-1968," Kentucky Journal of Communication Arts 2 (Winter 1971): 7-9.

[4]Several junior highs reported no speech classes, but indicated the inclusion of several oral communication units in their English program.

[5]Several schools indicating that a text was used did not identify the book, author or publisher. Texts cited without publisher were not recorded in Books in Print.

[6]Some of the teachers were employed on a part time basis to teach only one or two speech courses and/or coach the speech team.

[7]The four questions intended to extract the needed information appeared to have been improperly worded to obtain the pertinent data.

[8]Programs of Studies for Kentucky Schools, Educational Bulletin Vo. 43 No. 3 Published by the Kentucky Department of Education, p. 1.

TABLES

FOR:

THE STATUS OF SPEECH IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENTUCKY

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TABLE 1

SURVEY RETURNS BY REGION AND LEVEL

	Possible	Received	% Return
Western High Schools	58	43	74%
Western Jr. High Schools	36	27	75%
Central High Schools	143	86	60%
Central Jr. High Schools	91	49	54%
Eastern High Schools	99	48	48%
Eastern Jr. High Schools	28	13	46%
Totals:	455	266	58%

High Schools Responding - 177/300 = 59%

Jr. High Schools Responding - 89/155 = 57%

KENTUCKY EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT REGIONS (KEDRs)

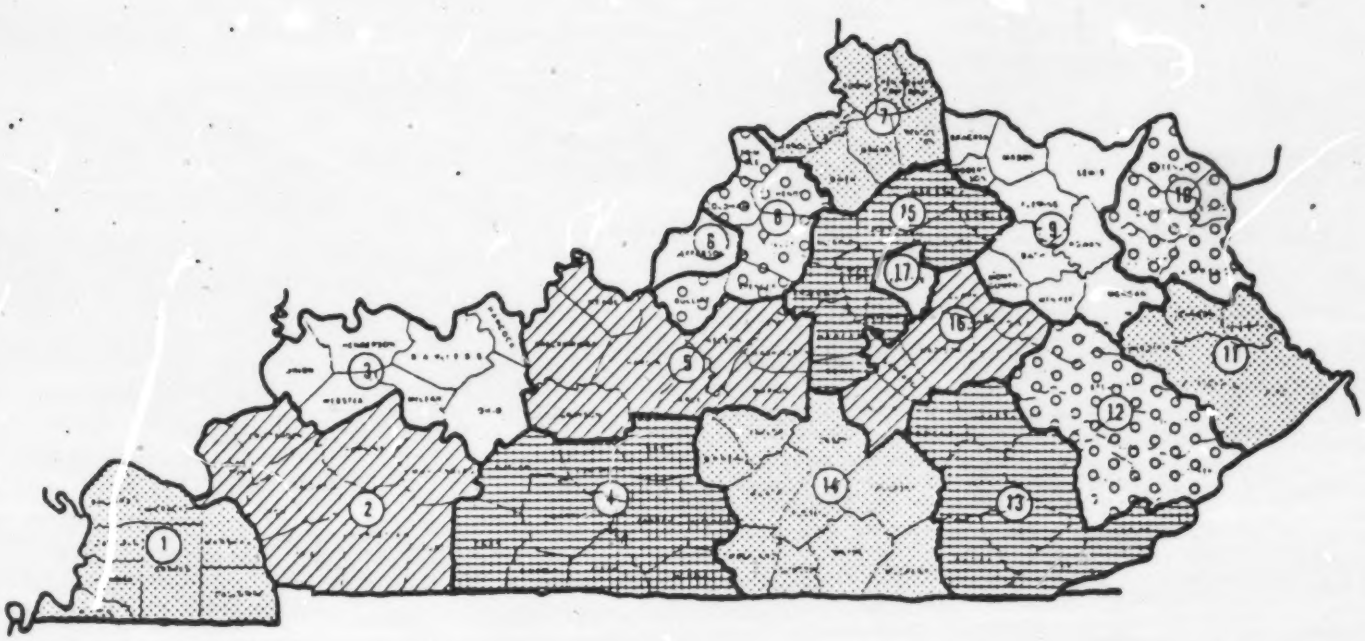

TABLE 2

	Number of Courses Offered by Responding Schools								Duration of Courses in Responding Schools				
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight	6wk	9wk	sem.	yr.	other
Sr. High	45%	29%	10%	6%	5%	5%	0	4%	2%	28%	26%	26%	17%
Jr. High	43%	14%	14%	14%	4%	7%	0	0	15%	12%	6%	52%	15%

TABLE 3

TEXTS USED IN KENTUCKY[5]

Name	Publisher	Number
The Art of Speaking	Ginn Publishing Company	19
The New American Speech	Lippincott	15
From Thought to Speech	Heath	12
38 Basic Speech Experiences	Clark Publishing Company	10
Speaking by Doing	National Textbook	5
Speech in Action	Scott-Foresman	3
Basic Drama Projects		3
Speech For All	Allyn & Bacon	2
Pathways to Speech		2
Patterns in Communication	Lippincott	2
Play Production	Barnes & Noble	2
Fundamentals of Debate	Scott-Foresman	2
Stage Make-Up	Watson	1
An Actor's Workbook	Harcourt Brace	1
The Stage and the School	McGraw-Hill	1
A Basic Rhetoric of Speech Communication		1
A Guide to Oral Interpretation	Oddyssey Press	1
The Reader	Oddyssey Press	1
Practical Methods in Speech	Holt, Rhinehart & Winston	1
Speech For Today		1
Basic Speech	MacMillian Publishing Company	1
Speak-Up		1
Speaking of Communication		1
Building Better Speech		1

TABLE 4

PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS TEACHING SPECIFIC UNITS IN SPEECH

	Inf. Spk.	RTV	Spe. Occ.	Pers. Spk.	Out-line	Deb.	Disc.	List.	Drm.	Tec. Th.	Act.	Dir.	Int.	Other
Sr. High	94%	42%	72%	88%	66%	47%	73%	71%	64%	21%	46%	11%	71%	22%
Jr. High	82%	25%	50%	72%	53%	38%	50%	75%	66%	6%	47%	9%	69%	34%
Combined	92%	41%	67%	85%	63%	45%	68%	72%	64%	19%	46%	11%	71%	24%

TABLE 5

AGE OF SPEECH PROGRAMS IN THE STATE BY REGION

	0-3 years			4-7 years			8-10 years			over 10 years			Unknown		
	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E
Sr. High	5	8	5	8	15	10	5	12	5	14	32	12	1	8	4
Jr. High	4	8	1	6	5	1	2	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0
Combined	31			45			24			61			14		

TABLE 6

AREAS TAUGHT IN CONJUNCTION WITH SPEECH IN PERCENTAGE

	Social Studies	Science	Math	Eng.	Phy. Ed.	Voc.	Music	For. Lang.	Other
Sr. High	8%	0	1%	70%	2%	0	1%	7%	11%
Jr. High	21%	3%	3%	45%	0	3%	3%	3%	18%
Combined	10%	1%	1%	67%	1%	1%	1%	6%	12%

TABLE 7

PERCENTAGE OF SPEECH
INSTRUCTORS ASSISTING WITH PLAYS AND PRODUCTIONS

	Plays Per Year													Productions Per Year								
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
SR. HIGH	50%	20%	18%	7%	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	75%	8%	10%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%
JR. HIGH	60%	17%	13%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	83%	4%	10%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Combined	50%	20%	18%	7%	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	76%	7%	10%	3%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%

TABLE 8

PERCENTAGE OF SPEECH TEACHERS
PARTICIPATING IN COLLEGE SPEECH ACTIVITY

	Debate	Disc.	Interp.	Ind. Spkg. Events	Drama
SR. HIGH	29%	24%	39%	36%	50%
JR. HIGH	14%	27%	48%	29%	29%
Combined	25%	24%	40%	35%	46%

TABLE 9

EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAMS BY REGION AND PERCENTAGE

	Western	Central	Eastern
SR. HIGH	69%	65%	71%
JR. HIGH	66%	81%	80%
Combined	68%	68%	72%

TABLE 10

MEMBERSHIP IN KHSSL BY REGION
AND PERCENTAGE WHERE EXTRACURRICULA PROGRAM EXISTS

	Western	Central	Eastern
SR. HIGH	73%	75%	79%
JR. HIGH	78%	60%	80%
Combined	74%	72%	79%

TABLE 11

EXTRACURRICULAR BUDGETS BY REGION AND PERCENTAGE

	None			$100-200			$201-400			$401-600			$601-800			$801-1,000			$1,000.00		
	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E
SR. HIGH	12%	26%	42%	44%	32%	19%	13%	16%	15%	6%	8%	8%	0%	8%	8%	0%	3%	4%	25%	8%	4%
JR. HIGH	43%	0%	33%	0%	80%	0%	17%	0%	66%	33%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Combined	27%			32%			15%			9%			5%			3%			8%		

TABLE 12

PERCENTAGE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT
FOR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES BY REGION

	None			1-25%			26-50%			51-75%			76-100%		
	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E
SR. HIGH	40%	65%	54%	5%	0%	2%	0%	8%	4%	5%	3%	4%	50%	29%	31%
JR. HIGH	17%	36%	25%	17%	9%	0%	33%	9%	0%	0%	0%	25%	33%	55%	50%
Combined		47%			5%			6%			6%			36%	

TABLE 13

NUMBER AND KIND OF SPEECH ACTIVITIES
BY REGION AND LEVEL

	WESTERN			CENTRAL			EASTERN		
	Tourney	Workshop	Festival	Tourney	Workshop	Festival	Tourney	Workshop	Festival
Sr. High	5	1	0	12	0	2	6	0	0
Jr. High	0	1	0	1	0	2	1	0	0
Combined	5	2	0	13	0	4	7	0	1

TABLE 14

OCCURRANCE PERCENTAGE OF EVENT AT
SPEECH ACTIVITIES BY REGION AND LEVEL

	Debate			Discussion			Interp			Pub. Spkg.			Drama		
	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E	W	C	E
Sr. High	80%	27%	33%	40%	19%	33%	100%	46%	56%	100%	42%	56%	80%	27%	62%
Jr. High	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	66%	0%
Combined		33%			22%			58%			58%			43%	